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Staton introduces legislation to help Georgia's less affluent counties



ATLANTA – State Sen. Cecil Staton (R-Macon) introduced the *Rural Georgia Economic Development Act of 2006* today during a press conference at the State Capitol. His legislation will allow for voters to amend the Georgia constitution in order to help the state's counties that don't have the ability to raise significant local taxes create Community Improvement Districts (CIDs).

Community Improvement Districts exist as a constitutional way to pay for infrastructure and economic development tools that a county cannot afford without raising taxes on current residents. These infrastructure items might include water

management and control, water supply, sewer and waste-water management, sewer mains and pipes, bridges or culverts, district roads, street lights, buses, trolleys, parks and facilities, school buildings, security services and mosquito control.

“The most prominent model of the CID has been used in Florida and Texas for many years,” Sen. Staton said. “Florida has a project underway in Leesburg, Florida, called the Villages, which has been very successful. I believe communities across Georgia can benefit from a similar program, and that’s why I’m introducing this Constitutional Amendment today.”

Georgia’s 159 counties are divided into four tiers. Georgia’s wealthiest, mostly metro Atlanta, counties are tier four. Tiers one, two and three designate the counties in Georgia that are unable to raise substantial sales taxes. The Community Improvement Districts are designed specifically to spawn and drive economic growth in poorer counties, not counties that currently have an abundance of economic tools and current growth.

Community Improvement Districts are created upon application of private citizens who want to fund and manage a CID. After applications are made, county commissioners can approve or reject an application. If the petition is approved, the county governing authority must pass a resolution approving the district and naming the five initial members to the board of supervisors for the district.

If approved by the voters, the legislation takes effect on January 1, 2007.

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Photo Cutline: *State Sen. Cecil Staton (R-Macon) and Sen. Jim Whitehead (R-Evans) discuss the Rural Georgia Economic Development Act of 2006 during a press conference at the state capitol.*

Sen. Cecil Staton of the 18th Senate district may be reached at 404.656.5039. He represents portions of Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones and Monroe counties.